There is no waiting list for new domestic LPG connections in the State of Himachal Pradesh as on 1.11.2007.

(c) and (d) Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have reported that at present, there is no overall shortage of LPG in the country, including the State of Himachal Pradesh and LPG supplies to distributors are being made by the OMCs through indigenous production and imports in accordance with the genuine demand of customers registered with the LPG distributors.

Opening of branches of Indian Banks in USA

†*69. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that USA is not giving permission to Indian Banks for opening branches in their country;

(b) if so, the steps being taken by Government to tackle this situation; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Out of the applications of three Indian Banks for a branch licence in the United States of America (USA), the Federal Reserve Board of the USA has recently approved the proposal of ICICI Bank to upgrade its Representative Office into a Bank Branch. The other two proposals of State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of Baroda (BoB) for opening additional branches in USA have not yet been approved.

(b) and (c) The delay in SBI and BoB obtaining a licence for their additional branches in USA has been taken up by the Government and the Reserve Bank of India with their counterparts in the USA.

Fund managers for the New Pension Scheme

*70. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have selected the fund managers for the New Pension Scheme, and if so, the details thereof and the criteria for the selection of such fund managers;

(b) whether it is a fact that the selected fund managers do not have the requisite data of the corpus collected since January, 2004;

(c) what steps are being taken to facilitate expeditious collation of pension data by the fund managers; and

(d) what is the estimated return accrued since January, 2004 when the corpus was not being managed by any fund manager?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Three sponsors of pension funds *viz.* State Bank of India, Life Insurance Corporation of India and UTI Asset Management Company have been selected by PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority), through a process of competitive bidding, to manage the pension corpus of Government employees under the New Pension System (NPS). The selection was based on the criteria

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

which included technical as well as commercial parameters such as experience of fund management, track record, technological platforms, management fee etc.

(b) and (c) The details of the pension accounts and pension corpus of the Central Government employees under the new pension system since 1st January, 2004 are being maintained by the Central Pension Accounting Office (CPAO) under the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India, till date. The pension corpus will be managed by the three pension fund companies once the NPS architecture is made fully operational.

(d) Government has been giving a fixed return of 8% per annum on the NPS corpus till date.

Development of airport infrastructure in the country

*71. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a bid to provide world-class airport infrastructure, Government are planning to offer over 300 airports and airstrips to private players for development through the public-private partnership;

(b) whether apart from commercial use, the airstrips would also be used for providing training to pilots;

(c) whether of the 400 airports airstrips and helipads, 127 are owned by the Airports Authority of India and, only 74 are operational and the Ministry is ready to develop the remaining 53 airports along with private players; and

(d) if so, whether the development work in all the airports will be over by 2010?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) At present, there is no such plan.

(b) The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has plans to promote flying-schools at its non-operational and relatively less busy airports. AAI has, accordingly, invited Expressions of Interest (EoI).

(c) There are 453 airports/airstrips in the country belonging to AAI, Defence, State Governments and Private entities. Of these, 127 belong to AAI, including 28 civil-enclaves at defence airports, 40 AAI airports are non-operational. Such airports are taken up for development/ upgradation on request from airlines operators and the concerned State Governments. AAI has no plans to develop such airports jointly with private players.

(d) Development/Upgradation of airports is a continuous process depending upon the traffic potential, demands from airlines operators, commercial viability etc. However, development/ upgradation work of the identified 35 non-metro airports is scheduled to be completed by March, 2010.

Commercial use of ground water

*72. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether any Conference on Ground Water was held in New Delhi in September, 2007;

(b) if so, what were the details of discussion and outcome thereof;